



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

**Committee on Aging
Public Hearing
Tuesday, February 28, 2012**

Written Testimony of Laurie Julian, Director of Public Policy, Alzheimer's Association, CT Chapter (The Association).

Senator Prague, Representative Serra and distinguished members of the Committee on Aging, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on several bills that are before you today on behalf of the Alzheimer's Association, CT Chapter.

The Alzheimer's Association is a donor supported, non-profit organization serving the needs of families, health care professionals and those individuals who are affected with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The Association provides information and resources, support groups, education and training, and a 24 hour, 7 day a week Helpline.

SB 143 An Act Increasing Eligibility and Funding for the Alzheimer's Respite Program

In Connecticut, there are over 70,000 citizens with Alzheimer's or other related dementia.ⁱ This is projected to escalate rapidly in coming years as the baby boomer generation ages.

There are more than 169,000 caregivers, usually family members who provide unpaid care for someone with the disease, often compromising their own health. Alzheimer's and Dementia caregivers provide over \$2.3 billion in uncompensated services and endure significant emotional, physical and mental stress, multiplying the overall cost of the disease.ⁱⁱ Sixty-one percent of caregivers for people with Alzheimer's or other dementia rate the emotional stress of caregiving as high or very high, and are more than twice as likely as caregivers of people without these conditions to say the greatest difficulty associated with caregiving is that it creates or aggravates health problems.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Alzheimer's Statewide Respite Program

Since its inception, the Statewide Respite Care Program continues to be a success and provides the resources to a caregiver to establish an effective plan of care for the

individual with Alzheimer's Disease and allows the family caregiver much needed periods of respite to care for their loved-ones. Family and other unpaid caregivers often must reduce their hours of work or even quit their jobs, resulting in a loss of job-related income and benefits.

For the state fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, Statewide Respite Program services allowed 92% of clients to remain at home during at least some portion of the program year. 79% of clients remained at home for the entire program year and the program reduced the stress and improved the quality of life for 98% of the family caregivers.

While the Association commends the Governor's long-term care re-balancing initiatives, his proposal to cut \$290,000.00 from this program is inconsistent, and will impact over a hundred individuals and their families who rely on critical resources and assistance to support or care for their loved ones. Limiting a community-based support that provides caregivers with an option to keep individuals with Alzheimer's at home threatens to hasten transition to more expensive alternatives, such as assisted living or nursing home care.

Alzheimer patients are most at risk of nursing home transition. This has significant financial implications for state budgets. Average per person Medicaid payments for seniors with Alzheimer's and other dementias are nine times higher than Medicaid payments for seniors without the disease.^{iv} For this reason, Connecticut has a direct budgetary interest in policies that support family caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease.

S.B. 142 An Act Increasing Eligibility for the Connecticut-Home Care Program for the Elderly

The Association supports the intent of this bill to give consumers a chance to reside in the community at the most cost-effective option. According to the Home Care Program for Elders 2009 Annual Report, twenty-two percent of the recipients in the program have dementia. The Home Care Program is an essential part of the long-term care safety-net. For many individuals with dementia, the Home Care Program has allowed them to remain in the community with its support services. It is one of the most cost-effective nursing home diversion programs and saves the State of Connecticut millions by avoiding more expensive nursing home care.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on the two established cost-effective long term care programs that provide options for older adults in need of assistance and care to stay in the community.

Please feel free to contact me at Laurie.julian@alz.org, or (860) 828-2828.

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- ⁱ 2011 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report at alz.org/facts.
- ⁱⁱ 2011 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report at alz.org/facts.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The Council of State Governments, Alzheimer's Disease and Caregiving, Sept 2011.
- ^{iv} 2011 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report at alz.org/facts.